



**RIGHT FROM THE START: REPORT OF THE  
TRAINING ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMMING**

**MOSA COURT APARTMENTS**

**9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The training on Early Childhood Development (ECD) programming was organized by CARE-Uganda in collaboration with the Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI) and Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN). The training took place at Mosa Court Apartments, Kampala-Uganda from the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> August 2007. The training attracted ECD practitioners from Rwanda, Kenya, Zambia and Uganda. It was organized on the premise that there are gaps in current ECD programming which necessitated building capacity of ECD implementers to do programming better. The gaps include:

- Failure to distinguish between OVC/child rights programming and ECD programming
- The tendency to focus responses to HIV/AIDS on adults
- Risks of duplication of efforts due to poor planning and coordination
- Limited efforts on documentation, partnerships, research and information sharing limiting organizational learning and evidence based advocacy
- Ad hoc planning and implementation without rigorous needs assessments

The training built on participants' experiences in ECD programme implementation to improve each others programming. The training approached ECD programming through the conventional project/program planning cycle; Needs assessment, defining goals and objectives, identifying strategies, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

The Resource persons for the training were Dorothy Oulanyah, the Technical Adviser for Strengthening and Scaling Up of HACI Programme and Stella Ayo-Odongo, the National Program Coordinator of UCRNN. The training report was prepared by Simon Enamu, the Policy and Research Officer at UCRNN. The resource materials were largely drawn from ECD Group at [www.ecdgroup.com](http://www.ecdgroup.com).

## **2.0 Methodology**

The training was conducted using participatory methods. The trainers made use of buzz groups, brain storming sessions, plenary discussions and group exercises. This was essential in ensuring that participants' experience and knowledge in ECD programming enrich the training. It was also vital in promoting learning from each organization's experiences based on different contexts.

## **3.0 Objectives of the training**

The training had two objectives;

- To enable participants approach programming from an ECD perspective
- To draw on participants experience in programme implementation to improve each others programming

## **4.0 Conceptualizing ECD**

### **4.1 Defining ECD**

ECD was defined as all the supports necessary for children 0-5 (0-8 in Uganda) to realize their right to survival, protection, participation and development. ECD is holistic and

encompasses physical growth, cognitive development, social and emotional wellbeing of young children. ECD goes beyond pre-school education.

#### **4.2 The rationale for focusing on ECD**

- The need to go beyond survival and guarantee a future for young children
- Demand for ECD programmes is increasing due to increasing awareness of children's rights, rise in the number of women in the workforce, competitive education systems, increasing child rights violations and disruption of traditional family settings by HIV/AIDS armed conflicts. It is thus imperative for actors to go beyond islands of excellence to large scale programming.
- Investing in ECD has economic benefits such as building a future human resources and reducing wastage in primary schools through dropouts
- Governments committed to support ECD by enacting, signing or ratifying laws, treaties and conventions. they have the obligation to invest in ECD

#### **3.3 ECD Programming principles**

There are certain tenets that inform ECD programming. The first set of principles is the underlying/general guidelines that characterize the rights based approach to programming. These include:

- Do no harm;
- Best interest of the child
- Time is of essence
- Consider the concentric circles around the child

The general principles are supported by underlying ECD programming principles i.e;

- Develop programmes that are stimulating and encourage interaction among children. These must be relevant to the context in which children live.
- Ensure that ECD programmes allow children to exercise their evolving skills and to develop new ones, paying attention to age and other differences like disability.
- Focus on development needs and abilities of young children. Make programs holistic and work in partnerships.

The third set of principles is specific to ECD programming: These are:

- Contextual principles: ECD implementers must pay attention to context because context is everything. It determines success/failure of any ECD intervention.
- The social principles: These relate to the social dimensions of development such as the need to ensure equity, involvement of families and communities and building on existing practices/institutions.
- Technical principles: ECD interventions must take place within a broad conceptual framework, flexible in approach, cost effective, of acceptable quality and sustainable to the beneficiaries. In addition, the actors should start small and scale with a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system instituted right from the start.

## **Key considerations in ECD programming**

- Simultaneously seeking scale, quality, comprehensiveness, adjustments to local conditions, participation, cost-effectiveness, feasibility is bound to require making choices and tradeoffs.
- How can one do ECD programming in multicultural settings?

To resolve such tensions, it was emphasized that ECD actors need to identify and involve partners right from the start, implement what they can do best and leave others to do the rest, be flexible and use experiences from programming to inform advocacy.

## **5.0 ECD through the project management cycle**

### **5.1 ECD Needs Assessment**

A key consensus struck in the training was that needs assessment should be the starting point for any ECD intervention. It refers to a deliberate attempt to understand the situation on ground by doing strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. The following factors were identified as being critical when carrying out a needs assessment;

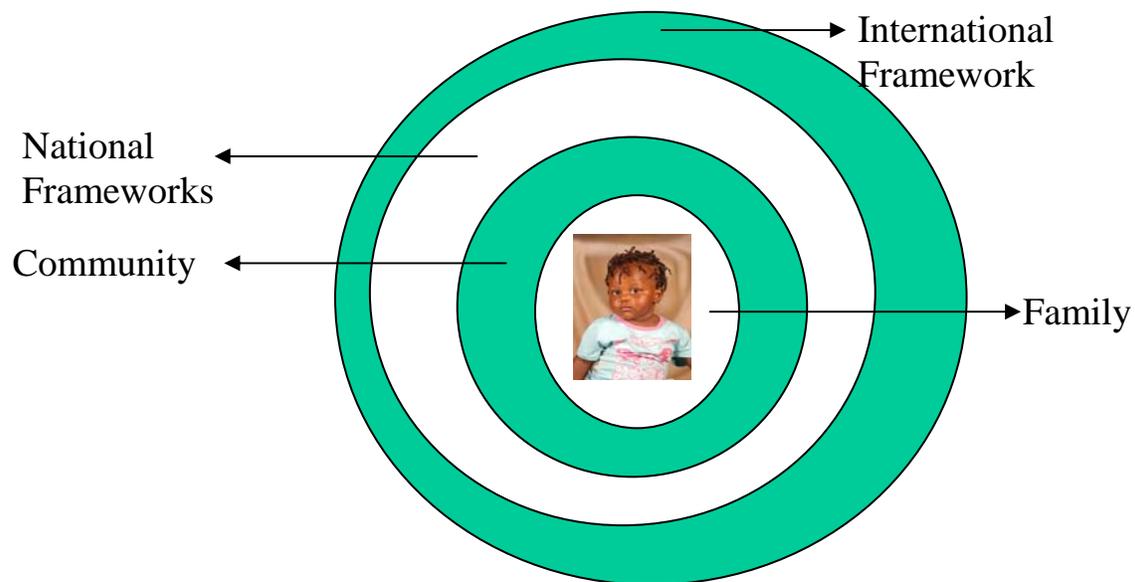
- ❖ Resources available with the assessor: This determines the depth and scope of the assessment. It is also important to find out resources and services available within the community of interest. These include finances, time and personnel.
- ❖ The assessment process should allow for dialogue with the community, enlisting their active participation and being ready to take their contribution. It is important to make the process is constructive rather compensatory.
- ❖ The information required: The information to be sought for during the assessment process must be clear. Indicators should be developed as baseline data against which interventions will be monitored and evaluated.
- ❖ The actors to involve: Key actors to be involved in the assessment process must be identified and their roles spelt out.
- ❖ Family characteristics: The assessment must bring out the different family characteristics and how these may impact on the intended interventions whether positive or negative.
- ❖ The status of children: Any program response will depend on the situation of children in a given locality. It is therefore of essence for a needs assessment to establish the vulnerability level of children. While the general status of children is critical, the assessment must pay attention to OVCs such as children with disabilities, children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, child heads of households etc.
- ❖ Underlying causes: It was stressed that a needs assessment must investigate the underlying causes of vulnerability of young children. This will inform the responses instituted to mitigate such factors.
- ❖ Understand the overall environment of the area i.e the political, economic and socio-cultural situation and their implications for ECD programming
- ❖ Existing policies regarding children; what policies exist? Are the policies known; how far have they been implemented
- ❖ Sustainability: How are the project benefits to be sustained? What sustainability arrangements exist, including options available within the local community?

## 5.2 Setting Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives must relate to the situation to be changed and should be informed by the findings of the needs assessment. It emerged that the following factors must be considered when setting goals and objectives:

- Clarity on the target group to be served: One must define the specific population to be served and the age group of children that can be included in the ECD project.
- Children's development status: Goals and objectives as a matter of principle must relate to children's development status as established by the needs assessment.
- The social principles: Pay attention to equity, participation of target group and build on existing practices.
- Be flexible and revise objectives as circumstances change
- Resources: Bite what you can chew; Avoid being over ambitious
- The policy environment: Set objectives in tandem with national policy frameworks. However, advocacy work challenging the current policy position may be an exemption.
- M&E: Develop appropriate indicators for goals and objectives as benchmarks for determining progress.
- Sustainability: Plan how the desired outcomes will be sustained in medium and long term.

## 5.3 ECD programming strategies



As illustrated above, ECD programming takes place at different levels, in tandem with the concentric circles around the child. The various strategies entail:

- Direct service delivery to children through community based ECD, centre based ECD and distance education.
- Support to and education of caregivers through home visits, maternal support programmes, parent support/education groups, sibling education and caregiver training.
- Promotion of ECD as an integral part of larger community development process.
- Strengthening national resources and capabilities through provision of training, research, infrastructural development, innovative technologies and supply of materials, equipment and vehicles.
- Strengthening demand and awareness to create an enabling environment for ECD to thrive.
- Policy development; Promote family sensitive social service delivery systems, analyze and evaluate current policies, promote their implementation, and participate in creation of new ones.
- Institute supportive legal and regulatory frameworks through monitoring and review of current legislation and development of new legislation.
- Strengthening international cooperation through international initiatives, and strengthening of international and regional networks.

#### **5.4 Planning programme implementation**

It is important to realize that irrespective of the strategy to be used, answers to three basic questions must be got i.e. what will be offered? How will it be offered? Who will offer it?

A good ECD programme combines goods/services, curriculum, activities and a delivery system. All these must ensure that children are not abused in the ECD programme.

#### **5.5 Resource mobilization for ECD programmes**

ECD programmes are financed through financial and in-kind contributions from various sources. It is critical to cost ECD programmes because it helps one

- Create a budget to determine the resource requirements
- Fundraise for the programme
- Know the real costs of your project: how much it would cost to transfer the approach to a different setting
- Ascertain the relationship between costs, effectiveness and benefits

Participants identified a number of financing sources for ECD programmes including:

- Community contribution: this must relate to their ability of families and communities to contribute.
- Government financing through budget allocation for ECD programmes and special taxes
- Self financing: ECD centres create income generating activities (IGAs) where proceeds support ECD activities, create micro enterprises that provide caregivers/women resources to pay for child care and other services.

Resources must be used in a way that maximises impact for example placing ECD centres in primary schools.

## 5.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Emphasis was laid on the need for a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system right from the start. A baseline data is crucial in informing the M&E system.

Monitoring is the continuous & systematic process of gathering, recording, analysis, and reporting of information related to implementation in order to provide early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. Monitoring can be classified into:

- Implementation monitoring
- Process monitoring
- Results monitoring

Evaluation is the selective exercise that attempts to systematically and objectively assess progress towards, and the achievement of an objective (Output, Outcome, and Impact)

Monitoring and Evaluation are important because they:

- Provide organizations with a tool to *monitor* how efficiently the organization promotes change.
- Provide organizations with a tool to *evaluate* how effectively the organization promotes change.
- Foster public and political cooperation and supports particular information needs for target audiences (such as donors, politicians, board members, project team etc.)
- Provide managers with a tool to gain timely information on the progress of project activities, allowing them to compare what was planned to what is actually occurring.
- Promote organizational learning and encourages adaptive management - action in response to learning.

The following elements were identified as being critical in a M&E system:

- The organization's mission and strategies and need for a M &E system.
- Who needs information and data from the organization, why, and when
- What data (management information and indicators) will be collected by the organization? Appropriate indicators must be developed at the various levels of project objectives from input level to results level.
- The source, method, frequency, and schedule of data collection
- The team or individuals responsible for data collection
- How data will be analyzed, compared, reviewed, and presented, and associated tools to be utilized
- Plans, schedules, and tools for evaluating information
- Plans, schedules, and tools for communicating information
- Related budgetary information.

## **6.0 Way forward**

To make the training yield greater impact, trainers emphasised two strategies

- Participants were encouraged to use the knowledge and skills gained to improve their programming
- The trainees were further called upon to share knowledge and skills gained with other ECD actors such as internal staff and partners.

## ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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